

State Representatives Frank Chopp & Jamie Pedersen

2008 SESSION REPORT



Spring 2008

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Dear Neighbors,

The gavel has fallen on the 2008 session; and it was a highly successful 60 days. The Progressive States Network agrees, saying of the session, "Washington state cranked out impressive gains for state consumers and workers in a short period of time.."

With the national economic slowdown starting to affect Washington State, we focused on the basics: addressing the home mortgage crisis, providing targeted economic stimulus, and maintaining a healthy bottom line for the state budget.

In doing that, though, we didn't lose sight of our basic values:

- Funding landmark investments in affordable housing.
- Increasing support for our public schools, from pre-kindergarten to universities.
- Making groundbreaking and nation-leading strides for a greener and cleaner state.
- Making advances for new state ferries, bridges, and roads.
- Keeping nearly \$850 million in state coffers to weather the national economic downturn.

This newsletter is just a brief review of the legislative session. Please contact us if you would like more information on these or other issues. We are honored to represent you in Olympia

Sincerely,

43rd Legislative District

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State Representative Frank Chopp

Helping Families Keep A Home

Having a place to call home is a fundamental part of the American Dream. Too many people in Washington are struggling to make that dream come true. The mortgage lending crisis threatens that dream for many families today. The Legislature took swift action to reform the state's mortgage lending industry. We

also increased support for low-income housing. A sample of the legislation we passed includes:



✓ **Doubling the Housing Trust Fund** to \$200 million, to build thousands of homes for low-income people across the state.

✓ **Increasing support for the Washington Families Fund**, a highly successful public-private partnership with the Gates Foundation and 17 other organizations that have provided private-sector matching dollars for services and housing for homeless families with children. A \$6 million infusion of state support will help an additional 4,500 families out of homelessness.

✓ **Subprime lending reform** to end certain bad mortgage products, such as negative amortization loans for subprime borrowers, and also to require better disclosure to homebuyers.

✓ **Mortgage scam legislation** will help prevent unscrupulous lenders from preying on people at risk of losing their homes and the equity they have worked hard to build up.

✓ **The pre- and post-purchase counseling funds** will provide advocacy and information to help families make good loan decisions and avoid financial disaster from loans they cannot afford..

✓ **Ensuring the customer comes first** by establishing higher standards for mortgage brokers to require they look out for the best interest of borrowers – a responsibility other professionals, including accountants, realtors, and lawyers already have.

✓ **Enabling the Housing Finance Commission** to expand low-income, single family and first-time homebuyer programs, as well as its support for multi-family housing developments with increased bonding capacity.

✓ **Stronger condominium conversion protections** for renters facing displacement, including an increased amount of notice tenants must get prior to a conversion and allowing local governments to require more relocation assistance from developers.

Education-focused budget



This year we put the finishing touches on one of the best-ever budgets for education – one that includes \$13.6 billion in funding for schools.

Even with such a dramatic investment, we must keep working to reform our education funding system.

Here are some of the successes from this session:

- Teacher salaries will increase 4.4% across the state this year – a ½ percent above the cost-of-living jump.

- \$5 million for the new Community Schools program which will save surplus schools for community uses, including the University Heights Center in the University District.

- Kindergarten students in districts with the highest percentage of kids from low-income families will now be able to attend full-day kindergarten without having to pay for it, giving them a jump-start to a successful education.

- An additional \$140 million to reduce class sizes in our public schools.

- Enhanced library funding so schools can invest more in staffing, books, and supplies.

- \$5.1 million for Vocation Skill Centers so students can begin to learn a trade while still in high school.

Responsible Stewardship of our Natural Resources



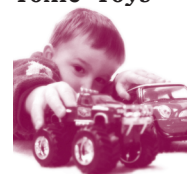
People choose to live in Washington state because of the quality of life. From the rolling wheat fields of Walla Walla to the grandeur of Mt. Rainier, this is one

of the most beautiful places to live in the world. We think it is part of our duty, as legislators, to protect this natural heritage. This session, we approved legislation on:

Climate Change and Green Jobs – Adopts greenhouse gas emission restrictions, emission reporting requirements, and creates a framework for tripling green collar jobs by 2020.

Evergreen Cities Bill – Helps local governments adopt management plans and ordinances regarding urban trees. These efforts will improve the quality of our air and water and protect Puget Sound by reducing storm water runoff.

Toxic Toys – Groundbreaking, nation-leading legislation to limit lead, cadmium, and phthalates in toys and other children's products in Washington.



Local Farms, Healthy Kids – Creates new relationships between the agricultural community and our schools, makes it easier to get fresh fruit and vegetables to local schools and area food banks.

Consumer Protection and Privacy

Identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in Washington. We passed these measures to help protect consumers:

- Requiring your consent before your cell-phone number can be disclosed.

- Prohibiting the unauthorized use of information gathered from the new “enhanced” driver's license.

- Restricting “data skimming” – the use of information garnered from a new technology called radio-frequency identification (RFID) chips found in many household items.

- Creating a consumer web site so all resources are available in one place.

State Representative Jamie Pedersen



Expanding the Domestic Partnership Act

Last year, with the leadership of Senator Ed Murray, the Legislature created a domestic partnership registry to allow all Washington families the ability to obtain basic rights and protections. This year, we took another step toward equal treatment for all families, giving domestic partners over 170 new rights and responsibilities. I am proud to have been the prime sponsor of this bill.

This year's bill focuses on financial security, addressing community property, probate protections, joint responsibility for debts, protection from having to sell the family home to pay for nursing home costs, veterans' benefits, and spousal testimonial privileges.

It's amazing how far we've come since the Washington Supreme Court ruled that any rights for same-sex couples must come from the Legislature. Considering the battles that have been waged for decades, our recent progress is an encouraging sign for future legislative sessions.

Working for a Clean and Healthy Environment

I worked on two bills this session to protect our environment. House Bill 2499, which passed the Legislature and was signed into law by the Governor, will save tons of paper currently wasted by publicly traded companies by allowing them to distribute most materials to shareholders electronically. Those who want paper copies can still receive them, but experience in other states has shown that this will save thousands for trees.

I also continued to fight to reduce the use of chemical pesticides in schools. House Bill 1806, which passed the House and two Senate committees, would have created a model integrated pest management program to be adopted by all school districts in the state. It would also have provided funding for experts at Washington State University to help school districts use nonchemical means to control pests. Unfortunately, this bill fell victim to the short session and died on the Senate floor at the cutoff. As the father of a young child, I will be back next year to make sure that this important policy becomes law.

Fighting to keep your prescriptions private

My biggest frustration in the Legislature so far involves a practice by drug companies called “data mining”. Right now, pharmaceutical representatives can buy prescription data and lobby your doctor to prescribe their drugs more. Worse still, it works. Studies have shown prescriptions being pushed by drug reps see 30 percent increases.

This practice has to stop. In a time when health care costs continue to rise, we need to have doctors prescribing drugs based on medical evidence – and not being pressured into prescribing more expensive drugs. I introduced this year and last year, House Bills 1850 and 2664, to prohibit the sale of your prescription information. I will keep working on this issue until we have stopped this abuse.

State Representatives Frank Chopp & Jamie Pedersen

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Progress on Health Care

Momentum continues to build for health care reform on the state and federal levels. To make real progress, we need leadership from the president and Congress. Until then, we'll continue to seek solutions to the problems: accessibility, quality and affordability at the state level.

Insurance Commissioner review of insurance rate increases – The Legislature gave the state Insurance Commissioner authority to review insurance rates in the individual market, and reject those that are unreasonable.

Increasing the number of primary care physicians and providing every patient a “medical home” – Family doctors focus on a healthy life, not just on the symptom you're presenting that day. We passed legislation that will help increase our state's family doctor corps and help move us toward a health care system in which every person has a “medical home” – a doctor (or nurse-practitioner, or other primary provider) who knows his or her name and medical history and coordinates that person's care.

Protecting patient safety – We took three big steps to increase the quality of care in Washington.

- Directed the state Department of Health to more quickly identify and take disciplinary action against health professionals who pose a risk to the public;



- Required that hospitals and surgical centers report to the Department of Health when preventable actions cause harm to patients – DOH will then make that information available to the public; and
- Defined strict guidelines for the qualifications, training, and scope of practice for counselors, under a new registration requirement.



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